IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method implemented in a computer-readable medium that processed on a computer to authenticate a media stream recipient, comprising:

automatically receiving an authentication request from a media player when a recipient attempts to use the media player to play a media stream, the media stream includes the media player and media content and the media content is in a format known only to the media player and is not accessible to the recipient until the media player determines that the recipient is authenticated for access and the media player generates authentication information on behalf of the recipient and supplies that authentication information with the authentication request, and wherein the media player is self-loading and self-extracting from the streamed media stream within a computing environment of the recipient, and self-loads and executes when the recipient attempts to use the media player to play the media content, and wherein when the recipient receives the media content via the media stream the recipient receives with that media stream the media player, wherein the generated authentication information includes an identity for the recipient, an identification for the media content or media stream, an Internet Protocol (IP) address for a recipient computing device of the recipient, settings for the computing device's electronic environment, an identification for the requesting media player, identifications for any previous sender or recipient of the media stream, and an identity of a content provider that owns the media stream;

verifying that the recipient is authorized to play the media content of the media stream in response to the media player supplied and generated authentication information; and

sending an authentication token to the media player over a network connection, when the recipient is authorized, and wherein the media player automatically plays the media content once the authentication token is received by the media player, and wherein the authentication token serves as an electronic acknowledgement that it is okay to play the media content, and wherein the media player and the media content temporarily reside in volatile memory of the recipient

computing device associated with the recipient and once the media content is played for the recipient the media player and content are removed from volatile memory and no longer available on the recipient computing device thereby requiring the recipient to re-acquire the media content and the media player each time the media content is played by the recipient, and wherein the authentication token is a key pair having a private key of the media player known only to an authentication service and the media player and having a public key for the authentication service, wherein the authentication service is the method processing on the computer.

2.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the sending further comprises automatically installing the authentication token as a licensing key on a computing device of the recipient, wherein the licensing key can include licensing limitations.

3.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein in automatically receiving, the recipient initially obtains the media player and media stream from a second recipient.

4.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein in verifying, the recipient is verified by externally contacting a licensing service with at least one of an identity of the recipient and an identification of the media stream.

5.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein in sending, the authentication token includes limitations that instruct the media player to self destruct the media stream upon the occurrence of an event or pre-defined time.

6.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein in sending, the authentication token includes limitation that instruct the media player to prevent the recipient from re-streaming the media stream to a downstream recipient.

7.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein in sending, the authentication token is at least one of a digital certificate and a digital signature.

8.-14.   (Canceled)

15.   (Currently Amended) A media content authentication system implemented in a computer-readable medium and processed on a computer, comprising:

a distribution service, which executes on the computer, for distributing media streams via streaming to recipients, wherein each media stream includes media content; and a self-installing, self-loading, and self-executing media player, the media content and media player are streamed together to the recipients, and the media content is in a format known only to the media player and the media player self-installs, self-loads, and self-executes when the recipients attempt to play the media content; and

an authentication service, which executes on the computer and that subsequently communicates with each media player over a network in order to authenticate access to the recipients that attempts to play the media content, and wherein each media player initiates the communication with the authentication service when it self-executes in an environment of a recipient to which it relates and each media player generates and supplies authentication information with the communication to the authentication service, the authentication information for a particular recipient to which a particular media player relates, and when authentication is successful each media player automatically plays media content included in the media stream, and wherein the authentication information includes identities for the recipients, identifications for the media content, identifications for the media streams, an Internet Protocol (IP) addresses for computing devices of the recipients, settings for each computing device's electronic environment, identifications for the media players, identifications for any previous sender or previous recipient of the media streams, and identities for content providers that own the media streams, and wherein the authentication service returns on successful authentication an authentication token that is a key pair having a private key of the media player known only to the authentication service and the media player and having a public key for the authentication service.

16.   (Original) The media content authentication system of claim 15 wherein each media player that self-installs contacts the authentication service immediately after it initially installs on a recipient's computing device.

17.   (Canceled)

18.   (Original) The media content authentication system of claim 15 wherein the authentication service uses a licensing service to authorize a number of the recipients for access to the media content.

19.   (Original) The media content authentication system of claim 15 wherein the authentication service receives information from each of the media players that is used to authenticate each of the recipients, and the information includes at least one of settings of a computing environment that is executing the media player, an identity of the recipient, and an identification of the media content

20.   (Canceled)